

# HANDLING SECRET PAPERS



Edition No.1  
2019



**SECRETARIAT OFFICE MANUAL SERIES**

# **HANDLING SECRET PAPERS**

**Edition No.1  
2019**

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# **1 SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF PAPERS**

## **1.1 General**

- (1) Every communication received and dispatched by Government, and papers (i.e. notes, correspondence and disposals) of Government in secretariat shall be treated as confidential and not to be communicated to a person not dealing with the subject concerned in the secretariat department unless authorised by an officer of the rank of AS or above dealing with those papers.
- (2) The Security Classification to be universally adopted in Government shall be as follows.
  - (i) Top Secret
  - (ii) Secret
  - (iii) Confidential
  - (iv) Ordinary

The Security Classification of papers should be made by Secretary or MLO and ensure that the Top Secret category is not unnecessarily employed.

- (3) The instructions under this chapter shall be read with provisions of Right to Information Act.

## **1.2 Top Secret**

- (1) Meaning

These papers contain information of such a nature that for reasons of National security they must only be disclosed to persons whose duty makes it essential that they should have knowledge of it.
- (2) Custody

Keep the papers in personal custody of the Secretary. An MLO may assist in the process.
- (3) Certain cases
  - (i) Reference to current or future military operations
  - (ii) impending movements
  - (iii) disposition of the armed forces and shipping/ secret methods of warfare
  - (iv) matters of important policies
  - (v) methods of secret intelligence and
  - (vi) ciphers

### **1.3 Secret**

(1) Meaning

These papers are of such nature that their disclosure to persons other than those whose duty is to have knowledge of them would cause administrative embarrassment or difficulty or would be helpful to the enemy without being gravely dangerous to the National interest.

(2) Custody

Keep the papers in personal custody of MLOs or an antecedents and character verified SO or Strictly Confidential (SC) Sections of secretariat.

(3) Locate all SC Sections in access controlled premises under surveillance.

(4) Certain Cases

- (i) Disciplinary cases
- (ii) Appointments and postings
- (iii) Cabinet notes

### **1.4 Confidential**

(1) Meaning

These are papers which may have to be kept confidential for a limited or unlimited period.

(2) Custody

Keep in custody of SO dealing with the subject.

(3) Certain Cases

- (i) Punishment and appeal cases
- (ii) Papers of news value
- (iii) Disciplinary cases



## **2 HANDLING SECURITY CLASSIFIED PAPERS**

### **2.1 General**

- (1) The procedure in the treatment these papers is similar to that of ordinary papers but the following special instructions should be observed.

### **2.2 Tappal and registry**

- (1) After receipt, addressed officer should open.
- (2) SO should register the papers.
- (3) SO should indicate only a catch word without revealing anything confidential.
- (4) SO should generate separate PR.
- (5) Secretary to check confidential PR periodically.

### **2.3 Referencing, noting and drafting**

- (1) While processing ASO should collect previous papers without revealing the purpose for which they are required.
- (2) While processing ASO should not show the files to anyone.
- (3) Top Secret papers should not be removed from Secretary's possession.

### **2.4 Submission to Officers**

- (1) While submitting to officers ensure secrecy during transit.
- (2) If a confidential paper exists in a file, treat whole file as confidential.
- (3) Transmit Secret and Top Secret papers in locked boxes.
- (4) Take papers personally during discussions.
- (5) While sealing covers containing confidential papers, do the sealing in the presence of the officer concerned or the SO in-charge of Secret papers.

### **2.5 Consultation**

- (1) A secretary receiving security classified papers from another department for opinion should either examine the papers directly at his level or send only to an officer who is authorised to handle security classified papers in his department.
- (2) Make no copies of security classified papers received from another department.

## **2.6 Circulation**

- (1) Officer concerned should send the file for circulation.
- (2) Do not indicate the subject matter openly.

## **2.7 Issue**

- (1) SO should send the physical confidential unofficial papers intended for other Departments of the Secretariat in sealed covers or packets.
- (2) SO should use economy labels and affix the seal on the labels. He should fair-copy and dispatch Government Orders, Letters, etc., through an ASO specially detailed for this purpose.
- (3) SO should print security classification in bold type on the fair-copy at the top of the first page. He should mark the covers also with security classification.
- (4) SO should hand over to the ASO only those portions of the papers which have to be copied.
- (5) ASO should examine the copies with the assistance of the SO concerned or an ASO of the section concerned or in accordance with any arrangement in force in the department.
- (6) If a security classified paper is to be printed, AS/ SO should sign a copy of it and send it to the Director of Printing and Stationery in a sealed cover. Print security classification in bold type at the top of the first page of the paper. The cover should carry the security classification in bold type.

## **2.8 Typing**

- (1) Entrust typing and dispatch to a specially selected Personal Assistant or Private Secretary preferably the Secretary's personal staff.
- (2) Designate him as the Personal Assistant and get his antecedents and character verified.
- (3) If the antecedents of any Secretary's Personal Assistant/Private Secretary are not satisfactory replace him immediately.
- (4) For fair copying Secret and Top Secret Government Orders, Letters, etc. use coloured letter heads specially supplied for the purpose.
- (5) When sending security classified papers to Secretaries at their residences, deliver them to the Office Assistant at camp residence under acknowledgement.

## **2.9 Duplication of security classified papers**

- (1) SO should record the number of copies made and serially number and identify each copy in the distribution of dispatch list.
- (2) Make no spare copies.

## **2.10 Dispatch**

- (1) SO should enclose security classified communications by post in double covers, the inner cover being marked with the security classification, sealed at both ends without using economy labels and addressed to the officer for whom it is intended by name while the outer cover should bear only the usual official address and the rank in the Secretariat.
- (2) AS should supply special Top Secret seals to Secretaries for use of sealing the Top Secret covers.
- (3) SO should use only cloth lined covers as outer covers. Seal the outer cover also at both ends without using economy labels.
- (4) SO should send such communications invariably by “Registered Post- Acknowledgement Due”. If dispatched by hand put the communication in single non-cloth-lined covers with both the flaps sealed and the covers clearly marked with the correct name, address and security marking.
- (5) SO should put confidential communications which are dispatched by hand or by post in single envelopes fastened with an economy label and sealed, the seal being affixed on the economy label and the covers addressed to the officers both by name and official designation.

## **2.11 Postal registration**

- (1) SO should register confidential covers sent by post at the post office in the following cases.
  - (i) ‘Top Secret’ papers;
  - (ii) ‘Secret’ papers;
  - (iii) Confidential papers sent to other Governments/ papers relating to disciplinary enquiries/ papers containing valuable documents or original records/ any other confidential paper.
- (2) SO should send ‘Top Secret’ and ‘Secret’ communications by “Registered Post acknowledgement due”.

### **2.12 Surprise checks**

- (1) Officers concerned should make surprise checks at irregular intervals, to cover transit, fair-copying dispatch, custody, etc., and ensure that proper security is maintained at all stages; any irregularities noticed should be set right from time to time.

### **2.13 Telephonic/ electronic conversations**

- (1) All users should assume that somebody else may be listening in as telephonic/ electronic conversations are liable to interception.
- (2) Never transmit security classified matters electronically/ telephonically unless a mode is specifically authorised by Information Technology department.

### **3 SPARE COPIES**

#### **3.1 Printed confidential orders**

- (1) SO should supply departments of the Secretariat with the usual number of spare copies, and one spare copy to other addressees.

#### **3.2 Number of copies for record**

- (1) SO should print only six copies without notes and four copies with notes of security classified proceedings and letters for record.
- (2) SO should enter distribution of copies of each printed order or letter in the space allotted in the “press slip”.

#### **3.3 Disposal of spare copies**

- (1) SO should keep in his personal custody the spare copies of papers of all kinds whose retention for further use is necessary, including those of letters, emails, etc. separate from the file.
- (2) SO should check and weed out stock of fair copies regularly and at frequent intervals.
- (3) SO should obtain the AS’s permission for the destruction of any papers whose further retention he considers unnecessary.

## **4 MAINTENANCE OF CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS IN DEPARTMENTS**

### **4.1 What confidential records are kept in departments**

- (1) Keep confidential disposals of the current and preceding three years in the departments themselves and the earlier disposals in the Andhra Pradesh State Archives.

### **4.2 Confidential records**

- (1) As soon as a confidential file is closed and the disposal is put away, SO should hand over the record to the ASO in charge confidential records of the section of the department.
- (2) ASO should acknowledge its receipt by initialing with date against the disposal in the last column of the Personal Register.
- (3) ASO should enter the record in the “Register of Confidential Records” placed in his custody and maintain in Form below:-

Date of receipt	Number and date of the paper received	Subject	Remarks
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

- (4) ASO should place the record in its appropriate place in the confidential bundle.

### **4.3 Downgrading security classification**

- (1) At the end of each calendar year, the ASO in charge of the confidential records should prepare a list of confidential papers in the records in his custody, the continued retention of which as ‘confidential’ is prima facie not necessary and submit it to the AS for orders through the SO of the Section concerned.
- (2) If it is ordered that any papers need not any longer be treated as confidential the ASO in charge should make out a list of them and transfer them to the CRB.
- (3) ASO should obtain the acknowledgement of the SO, CRB in the last column of the Register of Confidential Records.
- (4) Both ASO in charge of confidential records and SO of CRB should maintain list of records so transferred.

- (5) Strike off the word 'confidential' on such records and note the words 'since treated ordinary' with date.
- (6) In order to avoid unnecessary accumulations of Secret papers, ASO should review them periodically with a view to find out if it still necessary to treat them as 'Secret'.
- (7) Whenever it is found that they need not be treated as Secret any longer, down grade the security classification and send down to the appropriate section after obtaining the orders of the Secretary in each case.
- (8) Don't adopt an unnecessarily high security classification.
- (9) Downgrade security classification properly and regularly, so that it is possible for really secret papers to be attended to at officers' level.

#### **4.4 Transfer of confidential records to Andhra Pradesh State Archives**

- (1) Once in every year, the SOs should send confidential records of the fourth year proceeding together with the Register of Confidential Papers and a copy of the list of records to the Director, Andhra Pradesh State Archives.
- (2) Director, Archives should acknowledge the receipt of the records in the last column of the register. The list of records so transferred will be kept both in the section and in the Andhra Pradesh State Archives.
- (3) The annual schedule for transferring records by different secretariat departments shall be notified by Government.

## **5 MISCELLANEOUS**

### **5.1 Mode of address to certain authorities**

- (1) Military authorities:  
Follow the instructions given in series 'Outward Templates' .
- (2) When security classified covers have to be dispatched to any authority by name and if the name of the incumbent is not correctly ascertainable or there is a doubt over the point or if the officer is under orders of transfer, the inner cover may, with the orders of the AS, be addressed to "(name and designation) or successor" in order to prevent delay in the covers reaching the proper quarter (the words "or successor" should be underlined in red ink).

### **5.2 Confidential publications**

- (1) The maintenance and destruction of other confidential publications such as fortnightly reports, reports on newspapers, etc. should be regulated in accordance with the orders in force relating to them.

### **5.3 Custody of seals**

- (1) The safe custody of seals is of great security importance.
- (2) Maintain a list showing the persons to whom seals have been issued.
- (3) All such persons will be held responsible for the safe custody of the seals issued to them
- (4) Immediately report to the issuing officer should any seal be lost or mislaid.
- (5) The issuing officer should ensure by frequent checks that the stock of these seals is kept intact.
- (6) Seal Top Secret papers with a special seal, and not with the ordinary office seal.
- (7) Top Secret seals will be issued to those officers who are called on in the course of their work to deal with Top Secret papers; they must on no account leave the personal custody of the officers to whom they are entrusted who will be responsible for their safe-keeping.



#### **5.4 Disposal of waste papers**

- (1) Take great care both in the rooms of officers and sections in disposing of waste papers of all kinds including blotting papers.
- (2) Destroy security classified papers by burning completely.

#### **5.5 Handling security classified files in eoffice**

- (1) Mark a file as security classified prior to sending it to other functionaries.
- (2) A security classified file sent for consultation to another department can only be returned to the sender and cannot be sent up or down the hierarchy.
- (3) A security classified fill will be visible for viewing only during the time it is available in the inbox of the functionary with the exception of the Secretary in-charge.
- (4) An audit trail of print outs taken, downloads done, viewing times of the file under each login will be available.
- (5) The file number of a security classified file will not be visible to any functionary other than the individual in whose login the file is and the Secretary in-charge.

## **6 LEAKAGE OF INFORMATION**

### **6.1 Guarding against leakage of official information**

- (1) Members of the establishment must remember that they are subject to the provisions of the Indian Official Secrets Act and are precluded from divulging to outsiders or to other members of the establishment any information (whether expressly marked confidential or not) that may have come to their knowledge in their official capacity.
- (2) It should be borne in mind that what they come to know of in the office is confidential and is not to be mentioned outside the office or to strangers or to anyone other than those whom it is necessary that they should communicate with about such matters in the ordinary official course.
- (3) All members of the establishment must be constantly on their guard against the leakage of any official information whatsoever.
- (4) If any member of the establishment is approached by any one not officially entitled to do so either inside or outside the office in regard to any matter which is or will be dealt with in the Secretariat or for any official information in the Secretariat, he should refuse to see him, but refer him politely to the Secretary, the AS and if the person persists, he should be warned that the fact of the visit will be reported to the Secretary and a report should be made accordingly at the very earliest opportunity-if ASO or below to SO; and SO to the AS in a note.
- (5) Failure to observe these instructions will render the defaulter liable to punishment.
- (6) When private parties (including Members of the Legislature) approach the Officer of the grade of AS or above in the Secretariat for information about matters pending in the Secretariat, the reply should invariably be that the matter is still under consideration and no indication should be given of the exact stage of the file.
- (7) Important physical papers, even if they are not confidential, should be circulated only in closed boxes.
- (8) Special care should be taken to see that RAs/OSs who carry files do not attempt to peruse them.

### **6.2 Guarding against leakage of confidential and Secret information**

- (1) PS/PAs' used note-books should be made over to the AS of the concerned department when a fresh one is taken.

- (2) The AS will destroy these note-books after the expiry of three months from the date of the last entry in each book.
- (3) Nothing should be placed in a waste paper basket or otherwise discarded which is of a confidential or secret nature.
- (4) Such matter must be burnt by the persons responsible for it.
- (5) Blotting paper used for writing of a confidential or secret nature should be similarly destroyed.

### **6.3 Prohibition against revealing information to the Press**

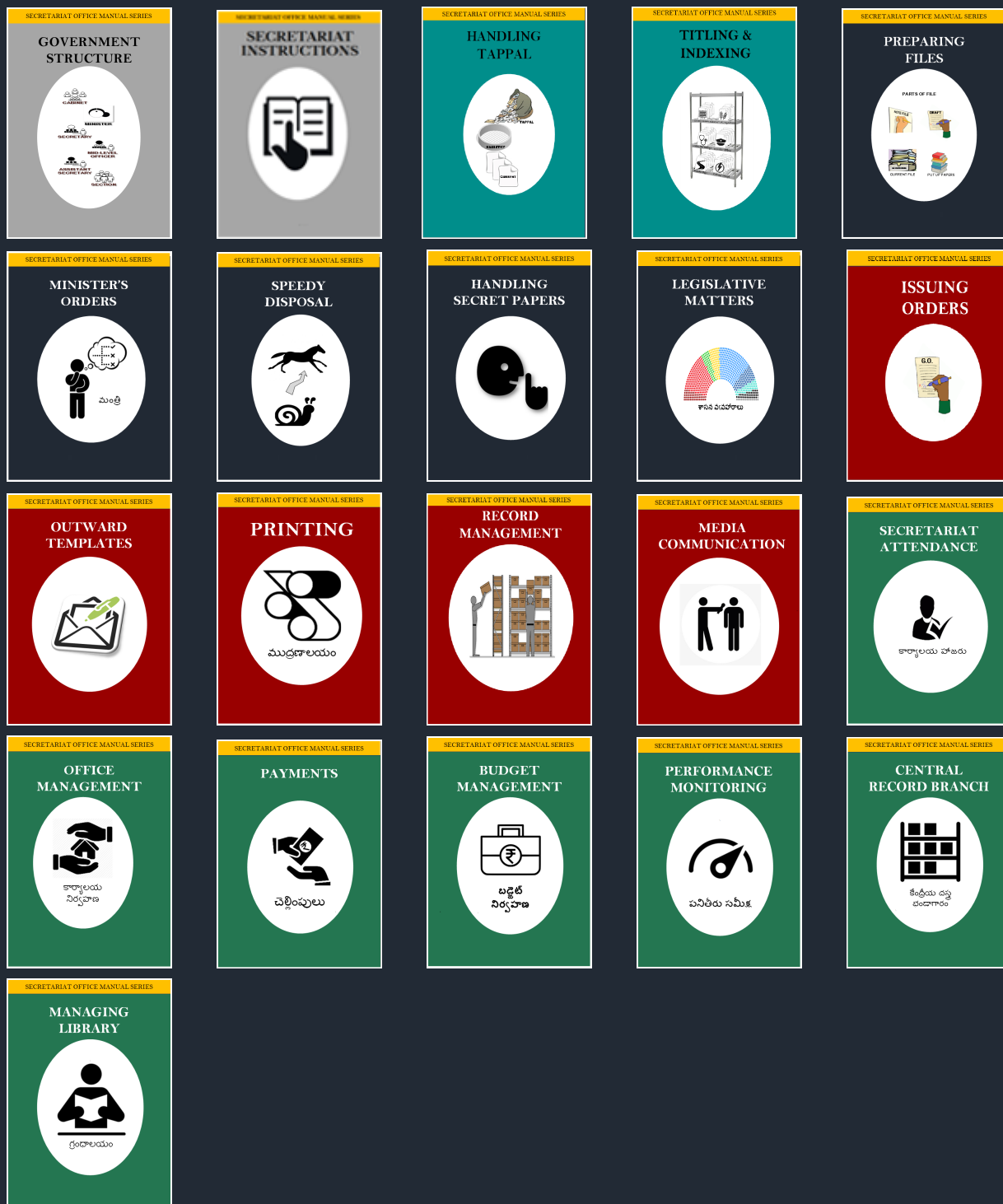
- (1) Members of the establishment shall not have any dealings with the Press or Reporters or Correspondents.
- (2) They run a great risk of severe disciplinary action being taken against them if they are reasonably suspected (not necessarily proved) of communicating official information of any kind to the Press, to Reporters or Correspondents or to members of the public.

### **6.4 Prohibition from seeing outsiders in office**

- (1) Members of the establishment are also prohibited from seeing outsiders at any place in connection with official matters pending in the Secretariat in which such people are personally interested.
- (2) They must not accept any presents or remuneration from any visitor, party or other person resorting to Government nor lay themselves under obligation to such persons in any other way.
- (3) Visitors should on no account be entertained in sections.
- (4) When the visitors approach the department, the members of the establishment shall apprise the visitors that they should meet only the officers at the level of MLO and above with prior appointment.
- (5) There shall be a Nodal Officer in each department to meet the visitors coming to a particular department without prior appointment.
- (6) He shall regulate those visitors within the department and shall meet their requirements.

### **6.5 Infrastructure security**

- (1) The ITE&C department will conduct periodic security audits of all desktops, laptop and other electronic devices operating in the secretariat premises.
- (2) ITE&C department will ensure protection of all the data and information from unauthorised access.



- Introductory
- Inward
- Outward
- Decision Making
- Office procedure

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

